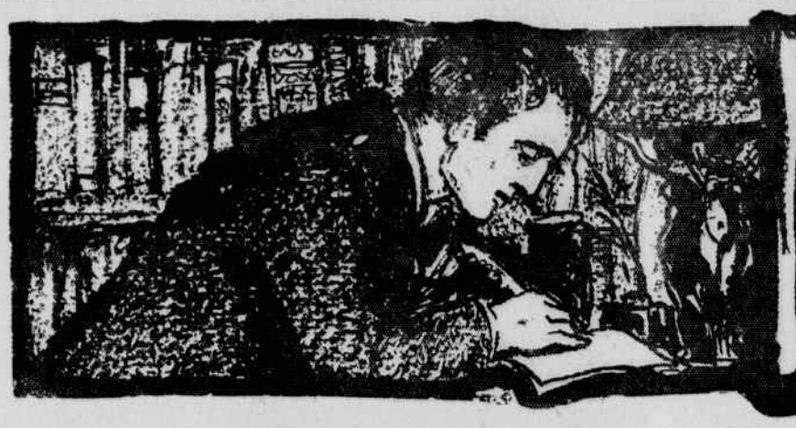

BOOKS

REVIEWS OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS WITH NEWS AND VIEWS OF AUTHORS

Soundings
In the Sea of Ink

Insects.

"GO to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise." That was written a few thousand years before nature study had become a recognized profession. It's no job for a sluggard. If somebody took a lazy man to an ant colony in a limousine he wouldn't have the concentration to consider her ways or the knowledge of other facts necessary to interpret them.

The review of John Burroughs's book on this page deals largely with his impressions of men. But he knew ants and birds and woodchucks; and he wrote a shelf of books that are the sufficient fruit of a busy life.

Yes, go to the ant and learn—but not chiefly by imitation. For the ant, with all the rest of what used to be called "animated nature," works within limitations which man cannot and will not admit.

Read Burroughs and Fabre, and Maeterlinck and Beebe, or the earlier men like Thoreau. When they tell of battles between animals or insects you may have a cynical impulse to declare that men are only animals or insects.

* * *

A Man.

THEN read "Life and Letters of Henry Lee Higginson" (Atlantic Monthly Press, Boston), by Bliss Perry. If you still agree with Dean Swift that horses are nobler than human beings, this meeting is adjourned.

Major Higginson was a soldier and when he fought he did it with all his might. But there was none of the animal's blind, stupid rage in his heart. In 1863 he wrote to A. W. Thayer, whose life of Beethoven Mr. Krehbiel is preparing:

"Well, old fellow, go your own way and work out your own salvation. I am trying to work out mine, so is Jim and so is many a good brave man. The many little salvations will go to make that of our country and of the human race. Tell me there is no American people, is no nationality, is no distinct and strong love of country! It is a lie, and those who have said it to me in Europe simply were ignorant! We've been to school for two years all the time, and have been learning a lesson—wait and see if we don't know it and use it pretty soon. We'll beat these men fighting for slavery. * * * Besides, this is all we can do for mankind."

There are three primary differences between war among men and war among beasts. First, even in the fighting some elements of nobility shine out—self-sacrifice, generosity, pity. Animals do not care for wounded foes.

Second, the discipline of war bears fruit in fine spirits. Whitman's poetry would not be the power it is in the life of to-day without the effect of the Civil War upon Whitman. If you doubt that, read Grant Overton's novel based on the poet's life and writings, "The Answerer" (Harcourt, Brace & Co.), and Holloway's collection of his early prose and verse, (Doubleday Page). And Higginson's great service to America illustrates the same truth.

None of these things is an argument in favor of war. For the third difference between man and animals is that even as the former fights he begins to react against his own folly, to reason and feel and to seek a way out. Insects do not propose any limitation of armaments.

If he had lived another two years how Major Higginson would have rejoiced in the meeting at Washington. For he would have realized that it is a step toward the harmony among nations which was achieved between the instruments of his great Boston Symphony Orchestra.

The story of this man's life is as rich in suggestion, in its way, as the "Education of Henry Adams," though the two were sharply contrasted in disposition. Higginson gloried in being a native New Yorker. His tribe, however, was of New England, like the Adams family. And part of the interest of the book lies in its expression of love between parents and children, brothers and sisters.

But a man's real character is better shown by the friends he chooses than by the family into which he happens to have been born. And Henry Higginson was a great friend. The Boston Symphony Orchestra and Soldiers' Field, which he gave to the Harvard students, were expressions not only of his love of music and his passion for education. They were the lovely flower of his friendships. In recalling the origin of the orchestra, he said:

"I had a noble set of men friends and loved them much and lived on them. They led me in part to thoughts and hopes which have resulted in this scheme. It seems to me to be worth while, and to be a little gravestone to them if anything, for they are all dead but one—a great loss to me and the world. To these friends I tried to give everything, because my belief was that one can not do or give or take too much from a friend."

The noble address he gave on the presentation of Soldiers' Field is a tribute to his comrades who died in the Civil War.

"All these men were dear friends to me; and with three of them I had lived from childhood on the most intimate terms, doing and discussing everything on earth and in heaven, as boys will—living, indeed, a very full life with them and through them."

Note how he holds to the same thought in two different connections. He says of his friends that he "lived on them" as one lives on food; and that he lived "a very full life with them and through them."

His gift of music to America, after all, was only an extension of friendship to the nation. He had felt the delight and the helpfulness of music in his early experience in Europe. This benefit he wanted to pass along to his people. But in every step he took the warm, personal element remained. Every man in the orchestra was a friend. He said to them all on one occasion:

"Do not suppose that I am ignorant about the various members of the orchestra. At one time I knew every man; and if that is not the case now, I know many of you, and listen carefully to the playing of this or that man; know well when Witek is doing his best, hear Ferir, hear Warnke, never miss a tone of Longy or Maquarre or Grisez, or Wendler or Sadony. I know very well what the trumpets are doing and the trombones, and watch the drummer and listen for the tuba. I watch with pleasure the double basses as they stand behind you all. * * * Whenever I go to a concert there is always a sense of responsibility on my mind, and there is always great joy."

Responsibility and joy—they are rarely found together in so fine a balance as in Major Higginson's character. He was a business man, but business did not harden and dehumanize him. And life never ceased to be an adventure. In old age he writes:

Major Henry Lee Higginson in the Civil War.

"I've always been saying to myself, 'What next? Come, move on. This is good, but what next?' How can we ever be content?" We can't. But as we "move on" the human race can take courage from a life like that of Henry Higginson.

War Serves No Economic Need
It Puts Resources of Civilization In Hands of Surviving Savage

THE FOLLY OF NATIONS. By Frederick Palmer. Dodd, Mead & Co.

IN the world to-day is a monster that may be likened to the dragon of folklore. It is steel-clad, and its eyes spurt fire; its teeth are bayonets, and its breath is poison gas; it slays a thousand victims with each stroke of its claws, and knocks whole cities into ruins with a blow from its armored tail. All over the earth men dread this monster, and look with horror upon its work; they cry out that it must be slain, yet at the same time they worship it, sing paeans in its praise, offer up to it their lives and the lives of those they love.

Such is in effect the picture of war painted by Frederick Palmer in "The Folly of Nations." Arguing on the basis of twenty-five years' experience as a war correspondent, he analyzes the reasons why men fight, inquires into the necessity for conflict, exposes anew the familiar fallacies of nationalism and of competitive armaments, and comes to the conclusion that warfare is the product not of reasoned purpose nor of economic need, but of misguided emotion, which may be made useful instead of destructive by being directed into the proper channels. In other words, "emotion and an attitude of mind are the most stubborn facts in international relations"; and in this statement is to be found the keynote to Mr. Palmer's position.

It is the author's contention that men will do for an emotion what they would not do for all the gold on earth; that they will take up arms through fear or through a wound to their pride when they would not do so for all the treasure of the seven seas. Realizing this to be the case, the protagonists of war make it a rule to play upon popular feelings; they scatter propaganda that makes men view with prejudiced eyes the traditions or customs of another race; they spread a cloak of suspicion and a veil of mystery over the actions of a foreign neighbor; they cover the grossness and cruelty of war with a golden glamour that allures the young and the uninitiated; they appeal to the sense of rivalry, the lure of power, the instinctive desire for physical supremacy; they arouse a false patriotism, a chauvinism glorifying that immoral principle, "My country, right or wrong"; they inflame the emotions with words, and induce the people to fight for a phrase instead of for a reality.

The economic motive as the source of war is not only denied but ridiculed by Mr. Palmer. Even were it not true that the gain of a thousand dollars from modern warfare necessitates the expenditure of a million, it could hardly be contended that human nature would tolerate a conflict merely in the cause of gold. "It seems callous," says the author, "even to intimate that the origin of the world war was economic. We know that propaganda on both sides in its well studied and perfervid exhortation understood that the economic appeal was futile." This is true in spite of the fact that "the unseen influence of the property interest, working in our subconscious mind, capitalizing our racial and national animosities, foments the war emotions and invents sentimental phrases to characterize them." But few men except the professional buccaneer would go to war believing that the only object was to give their country a favorable balance of trade; few men would go to war unless they imagined that they were serving some noble cause of which they were the inspired champions and of which their enemies were the unscrupulous opponents. For no matter how unworthy the cause he serves the common soldier of any army is apt to consider himself of the line of Prometheus; he is apt to be convinced that he possesses all the heroic qualities while his antagonist monopolizes the attributes of the craven and the beast. If he did not feel this to be so he could not fight; and so his propagandist and leader takes care that such delusions are firmly implanted. And so long as delusions continue to be instilled war is likely to endure.

Unfortunately, recent years have tended to strengthen rather than to abolish the emotions that are at the root of war. The last generation has seen a sinister change, "a difference of such deep sounding * * * that we cannot yet measure its influence on the future." Twenty or thirty years ago the word war was surrounded by a mysterious spell; it betokened the glamourous, the unreal and the far away; to-day it has become commonplace and may be mentioned without so much as a thrill. The world has grown more educated to war; it has come to accept it more as a matter of fact; it has learned to acquiesce more readily in the sacrifices of war; to adopt the attitude of a certain Greek peasant whom Mr. Palmer observed driving his flocks out of the path of contending armies, while consoling himself with the assumption that war had to be, that it was unfortunate, but no more to be averted than the earthquake or the thunderstorm.

It is this attitude that must be combated even more than the siege guns and the submarines. War is not inevitable, but it is unavoidable so long as we believe it so. We must awaken to the fact that it is an artificial institution which meets no inherent need that cannot be better supplied elsewhere; that it is unnatural as it is hideous, since man is almost alone among the animals that habitually destroy their own kind. If war gratifies the sense of rivalry, athletic games do so even more thoroughly: if war strengthens men physically it does so less perfectly than the less ruinous diversions of peace. If it is employed to enforce justice it accomplishes the end with a crudeness worse than primitive; if it is used as a weapon to compel order it is less successful than the police power might be.

In former times, war was confined to a small portion of the population; to-day, it has extended itself to practically the entire able bodied male element, and future conflicts give promise of including the women and children as habitual objects of attack. This condition is no more natural than it is desirable; it is the result of the combination of what is most primitive in human nature with what is most advanced; it is the outcome of the harnessing of the implements of science to the instincts of savagery. Modern warfare means the mastering of civilization by the barbarian; it means the releasing of the bull into the china shop, the surrender of the reins of civilized refinements into the hands of the brutal forces that civilization aims to suppress.

There is nothing auspicious in this control of the power of civilization by the will of the savage. Two conflicting elements are contending for supremacy, and one must ultimately dominate. If it is the civilized influence that triumphs, all will be well; if the force of savagery, the progress of ages will have been in vain. The contest is an unnatural and anomalous one, and the outcome is in doubt; but there is no logical or inherent reason why civilization should not be the victor, and warfare be abolished. By remaining passive, or phlegmatically looking upon war as unavoidable, we are succoring the power of savagery, by recognizing that war is an evil, but not a necessary one, we are taking that first step toward making strife impossible. The road to the consummation of that goal may be long and difficult, but the end can be attained if only we proceed with faith that we are on the path not to a Utopia, but to a practical and essential good. And the chief giants we shall have to fight on the way will be the superstitious respect for war as inevitable, and the misguided emotions that blind the eyes of men and induce them to squander their devotion and their lives in the cause of destruction.

STANTON A. COBLENTZ.

Ferrero Compares Russia With Decadent Rome

THE RUIN OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATION AND THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY. By Guglielmo Ferrero. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Reviewed by
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PROF. FERRERO is a brilliant word painter. His five volumes on "The Greatness and Decline of Rome" took the scholars quite off their feet, accustomed as they were to the ponderous philosophical periods of Gibbon and the cautious antiquarianism of Mommsen. Ferrero moved easily and familiarly through the centuries of the Roman Republic, marshalling his characters like the stage director of a modern play, measuring situations with the social psychology of the twentieth century, never at a loss for plausible explanations, abounding in suggestive analogies. The German savants shook their heads over the work: it was too lively to be scientific. But thousands of educated laymen enjoyed for the first time a real acquaintance with the Gracchi and the Cæsars.

Ferrero's latest book is even more pragmatic than the "Greatness and Decline." It is a study of the century from the death of Alexander Severus (235) to the death of Constantine (337), as a lesson and a warning to the Europe which has emerged from the world war. The third century is the mentor of the twentieth.

The ruin of ancient civilization was not, as most historians have represented it, says Ferrero, a slow agony due to the increase of slavery, the corruption of morals, the severe burden of taxation, or the lack of artificial fertilizers. It was caused by the deliberate destruction of the immemorial source and seat of authority in the Roman State—the Senate. The first blows at the prestige of the Senate were struck by the victorious generals in the days of the Republic, when a Scipio tore up the bill of indictment against him and summoned the people to follow him to the Capitol to celebrate the anniversary of the battle of Zama; when a Marius presumed upon his popularity to occupy six successive consulships illegally; when a Cæsar crossed the Rubicon in arms. But it is a mistake, says Ferrero, to believe that the extinction of the Republic meant the fall of the Senate. Even when the Prætorian Guard designated a Claudius or a Nero for the purple, the imperial authority came from and returned to the august body which continued for more than two centuries after Cæsar's death to embody the power of the Roman State. The Emperor was only Princeps Senatus; his authority was created anew at each succession by the lex de imperio. There was no hereditary principle, but only the fictitious adoption of apprenticeship. Reinvigorated by new blood from the provinces, the Senate showed a splendid power in the age of the Antonines.

The third century brought the crisis. After the assassination of Commodus military adventurers contended for the purple. Emperors were chosen for the first time outside the ranks of the Senators: an African knight Macrianus, a mad boy Heliogabalus, an illiterate Thracian Maximin. Revolution followed revolution, assassination followed assassination, until all expectation of stability was lost. "For the first time in the history of the ancient world, in the third century of our era, an immense empire found itself without any guiding principle by which it might distinguish legitimate authority from violent usurpation." Then the revolution which so many historians have wrongly attributed to Julius Cæsar was accomplished.

Ferrero proceeds, in luminous pages, to sketch the attempts of the great reorganizers to find a "guiding principle" to substitute for the defunct authority of the Roman Senate. Aurelian, restitutor orbis, defeated the armies of the invading Germans at Pavia and Fano, brought the East again under the dominion of Rome (except for Queen Zenobia's Empire of Syria) and surrounded the Eternal City with the mighty walls whose remains are still the admiration of travellers. He sought to stay the anarchy of military caprice by instituting the Mithraic cult of Sol invictus as the religion of state to replace the waning worship of the Roman gods. The Emperors became cosubstantial with Mithras, ruling by divine right. But this Asiatic principle of mystical absolutism failed to win the recognition of legality. It clashed with the whole inherited doctrine of Roman authority as an imperium bestowed by law. Moreover, however popular Mithraism might be with generals and soldiers returning from the East, it was another religion from Asia that was winning its steady way in the Roman Empire—a religion corroding the very foundations of the empire by its pacifism, its other-worldliness, its strict monotheism, its denial of aristocratic privilege and its equivaluation of Emperor and slave before the judgment seat of Almighty God.

Diocletian devoted a genius greater than Aurelian's, during a reign four times as long, to the task of restoring the imperial authority. He inaugurated a universal and relentless persecution of the Christians. He boldly declared the divinity of the Emperors (deis geniti), taking the title of Jovius for himself and bestowing that of Herculius on his colleague Maximian. He established the "tetrarchy" of Augusti and Cæsars, a divine dynasty to be forever propagated by cooption. He surrounded the imperial dignity with all the mystic ceremony of an Eastern potentate, jewelled crown and robes, prostrations and genuflections, trembling courtiers and menial functionaries. Under Diocletian the empire became a "vast cosmopolis of different races, governed by the Asiatic despotism of four Sovereign Gods, subject to an innumerable bureaucracy depending on these sovereigns and recruited without distinction of nationality or social rank." So long as Diocletian's strong hand was on the helm of state the vigor of his military and financial reforms was maintained throughout the prefectures, dioceses, and provinces into which he had portioned the empire. His prestige kept the junior Augustus and the Cæsars in due subordination. But when, worn out by the superhuman task of playing the earthly providence to the Roman Empire for twenty years, he abdicated the throne, his elaborate and artificial system fell to pieces. The tetrarchy collapsed. Provinces revolted. Armies set up Cæsars and Augusti at will, as they had set up Principes two centuries before. Diocletian's quadruple dynasty of Asiatic Sovereign Gods was as impotent as Aurelian's mystical absolutism to replace the lost authority of the aristocratic Senate.

When one of the soldier made Augusti, Constantine the Great, terminated the long period of civil wars which followed the abdication of Diocletian, by his victory over Licinius at Chrysopolis (323), a third and last attempt was made to integrate the Roman Empire through a principle of authority which should impose obedience on all of its parts. It was rather a transformation than a reformation of the empire which Constantine accomplished. He made Christianity the religion of state, though it meant the renunciation of the Emperor's pretensions to divinity. He moved his capital from Rome to the shores of the Bosporus, far from the scenes of republican tradition, and inaugurated a regime as absolute as that of the Pharaohs. The mystical camouflage of Aurelian and the fictitious dynasty of Diocletian were scorned. Constantine was frankly an Oriental monarch. What strength there was left in the empire retired little by little to the East, the birthplace of absolutism; while the West, harassed by the barbarians, ground down under oppressive taxes, a prey to injustice in the courts and rapacity in the administration, went rapidly down the grade to the low cultural levels of the sixth century.

The object of this sketch of the ruin of the ancient civilization is to point a moral. Ferrero finds an analogy between the third and the twentieth centuries. As revolution and anarchy followed the downfall of the Roman Senate (the source of legality for imperial authority), so the revolutions of March, 1917, and November, 1918, precipitated by the world war, have overthrown the monarchical system in Europe, completing a political evolution of two centuries comparable with that of the first two centuries of the Christian era. "Europe is again in danger, as in the third century, of finding herself without any assured principle of authority." That is the text of Ferrero's volume. All the other ruins that the war has produced, terrible as they are, are "trifling" when compared with the ruin of the principle of authority. Where shall the remedy be found? A few democracies exist in Western civilization (France, Switzerland, the United States) in which the government rests solidly on the principle of the sovereignty of the people, but "nothing of the kind is to be found in the countries which during 1917 and 1918 improvised so many republics. . . . Republican democracy is for those people but an improvisation of despair, the only alternative to which is the brutal dictatorship of force." Russia has already proved how easy the fatal transition from the one to the other can be.

Without specifying the method to be employed, Ferrero implores the United States, England and France, as the victorious and wealthy countries, possessing governments "which amidst the general anarchy are still working," to "beware of allowing themselves to be seduced by the illusion that they can isolate themselves in the midst of this all pervading flow of anarchy!" It rests with them whether Europe shall be saved or shall perish—and the fate of all Europe will be their own.

The book is brilliant and suggestive, but hardly convincing. Analogies are feeble arguments. The third and the twentieth centuries have, in reality, little in common. It was, by Ferrero's own showing, a series of reactionary and despotic makeshifts that were relied upon to replace the waning authority of the Roman Senate in the third century of the Christian era and not a positive, cumulative force like the still far from perfect democracy evolved in the last two centuries. From a different and more optimistic angle of vision the political philosopher may see in the overthrow of the divine right monarchies not so much the loss as the triumph of a "principle of authority."

Burroughs on Roosevelt, Ford and Edison

UNDER THE MAPLES. By John Burroughs. Houghton Mifflin Company.

MOST of these essays were written in the last two years of the author's life, in the Catskills. One section deals with California. But though nature is the main theme she stands aside while Burroughs relates his experience with famous men—Roosevelt, Edison and Ford. While Roosevelt was President "Oom John" went down with him to Virginia "to help him name the birds."

"We reached Pine Knot late in the afternoon, but as he was eager for a walk we started off, he leading, as if walking for a wager. We went through fields and woods and briers and marshy places for a mile or more, when we stopped and mopped our brows and turned homeward without having seen many birds.

"Mrs. Roosevelt took him to task, I think, when she saw the heated condition in which we returned, for not long afterward he came to me and said: 'Oom John, that was no way to go after birds; we were in too much of a hurry.' I replied, 'No, Mr. President, that isn't the way I usually go a-birding.' His thirst for the wild and the woods and his joy at returning to these after his winter in the White House had evidently urged him on. He added, 'We will try a different plan to-morrow.'"

They took a more leisurely survey later. But even in their quiet hour about the lamp Burroughs notes another example of surplus energy in his host.

"Pine Knot is a secluded place in the woods. One evening as we sat in the lamplight, he reading Lord Cromer on Egypt and I a book on the man-eating lions of Tsavo, and Mrs. Roosevelt sitting near with her needlework, suddenly Roosevelt's hand came down on the table with such a bang that it made us both jump, and Mrs. Roosevelt exclaimed in a slightly nettled tone, 'Why, my dear, what is the matter?'

"He had killed a mosquito with a blow that would almost have demolished an African lion."

They went back to Washington together, but even there birds were not wholly crowded out by Congressmen and diplomatists.

"I passed another night at the White House," continues the author, "and in the morning early we went out on the White House grounds to look for birds, our quest seeming to attract the puzzled attention of the passersby.

"'They often stare at me as though they thought me crazy,' he said, 'when they see me gazing up into the trees.'

"'Well, now they will think I am your keeper,' I said.

"'Yes, and I your nurse,' laughed Mrs. Roosevelt.

"When I left Roosevelt gave me a list of the birds that we had seen while at Pine Knot and hoped that I would some time write up the trip; in fact for years after, whenever we would meet, almost the first thing he would say was, 'Have you written up our Pine Knot trip yet, Oom John?' And his disappointment at my failure to do so was almost unmistakable."

Nobody but a determined cynic would refuse to see in the letter Roosevelt wrote later a merely selfish desire to be included in Burroughs's writings. There is something finer in the persistent plea:

"DEAR OOM JOHN: Did you ever get the pamphlet on concealing coloration? If not I will send you another. I do hope that you will include in your coming volume of sketches a little account of the time you visited us at Pine Knot, our little Virginia camp, while I was President. I am very proud of you, Oom John, and I want the fact that you were my guest when I was President, and that you and I looked at birds together, recorded there—and don't forget that I showed you the blue grosbeak and the Bewick's wren, and almost all the other birds I said I would!

"Ever yours, THEODORE ROOSEVELT."

Here are Burroughs's impressions of Ford and Edison, with whom he went on vacation to North Carolina, by automobile:

"Our two chief characters presented many contrasts: Mr. Ford is more adaptive, more indifferent to places, than is Mr. Edison. His interest in the stream is in its potential waterpower. He races up and down its banks to see its fall, and where power could be developed. He never ceases to lament so much power going to waste, and points out that if the streams were all harnessed, as they could easily be, farm labor everywhere, indoors and out, could be greatly lessened. He dilates upon the benefit that would accrue to every country neighborhood if the waterpower that is going to waste in its valley streams were set to work in some useful industry, furnishing employment to the farmers and others in the winter seasons when the farms need comparatively little attention. He is always thinking in terms of the greatest good to the greatest number. He aims to place his inventions within reach of the great mass of the people. As with his touring car so with his tractor engine, he has had the same end in view. Nor does he forget the housewife. He has plans afoot for bringing power into every household that will greatly lighten the burden of the womenfolk.

"Mr. Edison would sit in his car and read or curl up, boy fashion, under a tree and take a nap, while Mr. Ford would inspect the stream or busy himself in getting wood for the fire. Mr. Ford is a runner and a high kicker, and frequently challenged some of the party to race with him. He is also a persistent walker, and from every camp, both morning and evening, he sallied forth for a brisk half hour walk. His cheerfulness and adaptability on all occasions and his optimism in regard to all the great questions are remarkable. His good will and tolerance are boundless. Notwithstanding his practical turn of mind and his mastery of the mechanical arts and of business methods, he is through and through an idealist. As tender as a woman, he is much more tolerant. He looks like a poet, and conducts his life like a philosopher. No poet ever expressed himself through his work more completely than Mr. Ford has expressed himself through his car and his tractor engine."